

Connections

Celebrating Programs Through Partnerships
Summer 2001



From the Superintendent

Caring for the environment

An essential part of our mission is the stewardship of the Department's 6,000 acres of parkland, which comprise more than 10 percent of the city's total land area.

Parks is working to restore urban forests, expand recycling practices, restore and maintain trails, develop an Environmental Stewardship Plan, and reduce the use of pesticides. We are also a key player in the City's efforts to protect and preserve salmon habitat through these means.

More specifically, we are making progress in:

Property Acquisition and Park Development. During the 1990s, we bought more than 600 acres of green space with proceeds from the Open Space Bond. The recently passed Pro Parks Levy will enable us to add to this property in many areas of the city. Recent park development and restoration projects have also contributed to this effort, replacing seawalls and bulkheads with the natural beaches, and restoring wetlands at Matthews Beach, Golden Gardens and Roxhill Park.

Land and Plant Management. We have developed "Best Management Practices" for our landscape, horticulture and forestry operations with a strong environmental focus. This includes reducing the use of pesticides in parks, conserving water through the efficient use of irrigation water, restoring our forest ecosystems through the planting of native plant and trees and removing invasive weeds and plants. We have designated our first "pesticide-free" parks—Meridian Playground, Webster Playground, T.T. Minor Playground, Fairmount Playground, Beer Sheva Park and Bradner Gardens Park.



Education, Programming and Volunteerism. We have increased efforts to involve and educate children and others about the environment through our three environmental education centers at Carkeek Park, Camp Long, and Discovery Park. At Seward Park, we will be partnering with the National Audubon Society to develop a new nature center. The Seattle Aquarium and Woodland Park Zoo also provide many opportunities to learn about our natural environment. Volunteers greatly aid and enhance the work that we do. During the 1990s, we expanded our collaboration with volunteers by forming community-based "Adopt-a-Park" groups, and organizing volunteer "work parties" at parks.

While we are proud of all these efforts, there is still much to do. We need to fully train our park resources staff in our Best Management Practices and develop additional environmentally responsible practices. We also plan to broaden our environmental stewardship programs to our community centers. Through the Pro Parks Levy, we will soon be hiring new environmental stewardship staff.

All in all, we have a way to go but we have made significant progress.

— Ken Bounds, Superintendent

Conservation efforts

Seattle Parks and Recreation is strongly committed to the efficient use of water and energy. Since April 2001, we have set a goal to cut our water and energy use by at least 10%.

To conserve **WATER**, we have

- Upgraded irrigation systems;
- Stopped washing vehicles and equipment unless absolutely necessary;
- Fixed plumbing and leaks;
- Reduced hours at water play features;
- Used irrigation systems very sparingly;
- Accelerated installation of rain shut-off devices;
- Reduced watering of park turf, landscape beds and mature trees except with new plantings;
- Reduced irrigation of parts of five golf courses;
- Postponed some new landscape projects; and
- Filled our wading pools only on days above 70 degrees, and filled them less full.

To save **ENERGY**, we have

- Turned off field lights for practices;
- Scheduled all Parks Department softball league games during daylight hours;
- Turned off lights at all but three tennis courts: Lower Woodland, Miller and Lincoln;
- Turned off lights and office equipment when not in use;
- Turned off heat in most buildings on May 15;
- Reduced use of video and game machines;
- Reduced hours of sauna use; and
- Reduced water temperature of showers.

"Clickerz" computer camp

When Seattle University student Catherine Collins first proposed the idea of a computer day camp to Kimball Elementary School principal Barbara Nielsen, Nielsen thought it a great idea, but couldn't devote any staff time to the project. She sent Collins to the Jefferson Community Center and the resourceful Christopher Eng, and the idea began to take shape.

This summer, an average of 30 kids per week, ages 7 to 11, participated in the four-week Clickerz Summer Technology Day Camp that combined four hours of computer instruction in Kimball's computer lab with traditional summer day camp at Jefferson Community Center. Collins and Nancy Dienes wrote the business plan and formed partnerships with AmeriCorps, which supplied two volunteers, and with Social Venture Partners, which funded start-up costs.

Eng organized and ran the day camp part of the program and also provided some computer expertise. The Jefferson Community Center Advisory Council approved the program and received revenues from program tuition. Clickerz was so successful, Collins hopes to expand the program next year to more sites. For more information about Clickerz, please call Christopher Eng, Jefferson Community Center, at (206) 684-7481.



Christopher Eng



Carkeek Park: Blazing new trails

Seattle Parks and Recreation has three environmental education centers and is planning a fourth, but the Department's true centers for learning about the environment are outside the walls of buildings in our parks and natural areas.

Carkeek Park is one of these "outdoor classrooms," and a project by the Carkeek Park Advisory Council to improve Carkeek's many trails will greatly enhance this experience.

"When I come to the park on a Saturday afternoon and see all these people enjoying the park, I realize the purpose of the park is to serve the public," said Lex Voorhoeve, an Advisory Council member who coordinates the trails project. "Experiencing the park is a lesson taught by nature."

At 186 acres, Carkeek Park is one of Seattle's largest parks and a place of great natural diversity. It includes forests, wetlands, a saltwater beach, creeks, and wildlife—all within a dense city neighborhood. Over the past few decades, Carkeek Park trails have developed without planning and trail conditions have deteriorated. Erosion of the north and south bluffs in the park has affected many trails, making them impassable in areas, or causing them to slough away to nothingness in other sections. Erosion also reduces water quality in the park's salmon-bearing Pipers Creek. Because of the size of the park, Parks maintenance staff have been unable to regularly groom and maintain trails.

The Advisory Council's goal is to improve key trails so that park visitors can fully enjoy and appreciate the "natural experience" at the park. The project will also close lesser-used trails to preserve habitat and improve trail safety. Some of these side trails that have been inadvertently created over the years are on steep slopes or in sensitive areas of the park. New loop trails will feature viewpoints and signs to help educate people about creek, wetlands, and forest.



Lex Voorhoeve and fellow volunteer review site plans.

The Advisory Council began its work in the fall of 2000 with the first of three grants from the Department of Neighborhoods' Neighborhood Matching Fund Program. The grants funded a trail survey, trails project design by the local landscape architecture firm Worthy and Associates, and the first phase of construction.

The Advisory Council's Trails Committee has written grants, hosted public meetings and organized volunteer "work parties." Committee members include project coordinator Lex Voorhoeve, Peter Marx, Cynthia Wilson, Dean Fournier, Ron Schaevitz, Carey Chaplin and John Peterson. They have worked closely with Parks staff including senior gardener Bob Baines, Chukundi Salisbury with the Trails Program, volunteer coordinator Theresa McEwen, Carkeek Park

naturalist Brian Gay, landscape architect Randy Robinson, crew chief Patrick Merriam, and urban forester Mark Mead.

As many as 30 volunteers have worked in eight week-end work parties this year to do the restoration work. At the most recent work party, volunteers helped gravel over trails, build stairs and install natural drainage "turnpikes" in the south part of the park.

The project builds on the park's recent history of volunteerism and environmental stewardship. Volunteers have helped restore many areas of the park, including Pipers Creek, where salmon have returned to spawn.

"The volunteer support at Carkeek has allowed us to restore and nurture this great resource and has helped to educate the community about the importance of this beautiful park," said Pam Banks, education program supervisor at Carkeek.

Only a fraction of the project has been completed; work will be ongoing as funds and volunteer resources allow. Voorhoeve estimates construction costs at \$100,000 with the help of

volunteer labor. The Advisory Council plans to apply for another Neighborhood Matching Fund grant for trail restoration, and the project will receive funding from the Pro Parks Levy.

In addition to the trail project, the Carkeek Watershed Community Action Project, in co-sponsorship with the Advisory Council, has spearheaded a renovation of the Annex building located across from the Environmental Education Center to provide more classroom space.

If you're interested in learning more about the Carkeek Trails Project, please call Pam Banks, Seattle Parks and Recreation, at (206) 233-3967.

Pro Parks progress

More activities for teen-agers. Cleaner park restrooms that are open longer hours. The purchase of precious open space in dense city neighborhoods. More kids from low-income families participating in Zoo programs. Improvements to park sports fields, trails, and playgrounds.

These are some of the projects and services made possible by the Pro Parks 2000 Levy, and the levy's implementing ordinance approved in late June by Seattle City Council. The Council voted unanimously to appropriate Pro Parks Levy funds to support the first two years of levy activity, including 62 acquisition and development projects, new Parks staff positions, and the purchase of necessary equipment.

Seattle Parks and Recreation has also developed a management plan for implementing the levy program in a timely and cost-effective way.

The initial slate of levy projects and programs were derived from recommendations by the Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee, a panel of 16 citizens charged with advising the Parks Department on levy implementation. The Levy Oversight Committee is also developing criteria and an application process for the \$5 million first cycle of the Pro Parks Levy Opportunity Fund, which will fund even more acquisitions and improvements.

For more information and details about the Pro Parks Levy Program, please call (206) 684-8020 or visit the web site www.cityofseattle.net/parks and click on Pro Parks Levy.

Credits

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Photos by Bob Baines



Portion of completed trail restoration work in Carkeek Park.